

# Battle-Focused Training in the S4 Section

by Captain James E. Moore Jr.

Although the rest of Bravo Bowl was a quagmire, the unusually sunny German day had baked the tank trails bone dry. HQ 4 left an enormous dust signature as it sped from the TOC back to the CTCP. The S4 looked at his watch. It was 1527. After a long morning of planning at the TOC, he had just enough time to check what was coming on the LOGPAC, conduct the CSS rehearsal at the LRP, issue the combat trains order, make the TF rehearsal, conduct a hasty combat trains rehearsal, and hopefully catch a few hours sleep before 0400 stand-to. As his HMMWV pulled into the combat trains, the S4 mused that all of the orders drills back in garrison had made this all fairly easy, and the task force would do well during tomorrow's movement to contact.

He eased up to the ramp of his M577, and cheerfully greeted his NCOIC. When the S4 asked for the LOGPAC checklist, the blank stare he received made the hair on the back of his neck stand up. After 15 minutes of fumbling through what seemed like thousands of pre-printed forms and duty logs, the S4 gave up to leave for the LRP, giving orders to get the track organized before he returned with the LOGPAC. At the CSS rehearsal, the S4 sheepishly tried to explain away the probing questions from company ISGs who gave the S4 that look of men who knew they would be eating MREs tonight. The LOGPAC arrived within 15 seconds of its expected time. The S4 congratulated the support platoon leader on a good job and went to continue his troop-leading procedures.

The S4 wrapped up the combat trains rehearsal just before dark, and decided to see how the command post was running now. After a few short questions, he realized no one had any idea how to do much more than dutifully log reports on the DA Form 1594. The S4 comforted himself, knowing he had seen the LOGPAC arrive himself. At that minute, the calls flooded the radio: A Team needed one more fueler; C Team needed 300 sabot rounds; the engineers in B Company ate all of their MREs for dinner and needed resupply

before morning; the mortars had no WP rounds for tomorrow's mission; and to top it all off, the generator at the TOC was down. Through careful application of emergency resupply, and forcing his support platoon leader to run a midnight LOGPAC, the S4 corrected all deficiencies.

As he drifted off to a 30-minute nap, the S4 cursed himself for not being more involved in Sergeant's Time training back in garrison. These problems could have been avoided if he had shared more of his knowledge with his soldiers. Now it was too late. His only comfort was that in ten days the rotation would be over. The O/Cs could make it harder, but they could not make it longer.

Almost categorically in heavy battalions, training in the S4 section is not battle-focused. Why is it that so often S4 sections go to the field and have to learn their missions as they do them? Certainly it is not the intentional fault of battalion S4s, for no officer wants his soldiers to go to war untrained. The same is true for the noncommissioned officers in the section. The problem seems to be that, unlike the tank platoon, there is no mission training plan for the S4 section. So as a new S4, how do you fix the problem?

Training management in the S4 section is no mystery. It is managed just like any other unit or section, except that the S4 must develop the tasks to be trained. Five steps for training management in the S4 section are:

- Develop a standard logistic system in the unit
- Develop a section Mission Essential Task List (METL)
- Develop collective tasks to support the METL
- Develop individual tasks to support the collective tasks
- Plan the training

A detailed discussion of the steps follows throughout this article, followed by tips for pre-execution checks and training execution.

**Step 1: Develop a standard logistic system in the unit.** Although logistic

doctrine is standard in the Army, the actual execution of this doctrine varies from unit to unit. An example is Class I (subsistence) requisitions. Doctrinally, this is based on the number of personnel in the unit. Some units use the Personnel Daily Report to determine this figure. Others will use a headcount report to determine requirements, calling it a Yellow 1 or a White 2 report for example. A standard reporting system is essential in the unit's tactical SOP and is the basis for all S4 training. The new S4 should analyze his unit's reporting system, mirroring the brigade's system when possible, and establish a system in the battalion. These reports must cover all routine logistic procedures: resupply, maintenance management, weapons system replacement operations, and even casualty evacuation. Once this system is in place, the S4 section is ready to determine what to train.

## Step 2: Develop a section METL.

Just like a maneuver company, the section METL is derived from the battalion training guidance. Although a company is the lowest unit with a METL, it is unwieldy for HHC to list all of the tasks out of ARTEP 71-2-MTP, *Mission Training Plan for the Tank and Mechanized Infantry Battalion Task Force*, that the S4 section must accomplish for the battalion to be successful. Normally the battalion METL contains "perform combat service support operations." The new S4 must review the ARTEP 71-2-MTP and determine what his section must do to support this battalion essential task. This might include:

- Perform combat service support operations
- Operate the combat trains command post
- Operate the personnel administration center
- Establish a command post
- Move a command post
- Maintain communications

The list is not all-inclusive, nor does it necessarily constitute a METL that would work for all S4 sections. The S4 must do his homework and ensure that his METL supports the battalion, but

remains short enough to be manageable.

**Step 3: Develop collective tasks to support the METL.** Unlike a regular unit where collective tasks are defined, the S4 must now do some original thinking and develop the tasks that support his METL. The best method is to analyze the subtasks and standards of each of his METL tasks in ARTEP 71-2-MTP. Although all of the tasks will not apply to the S4 section, the ones that do will make up the collective task list. What follows is a sample collective task list for the METL task "Perform Combat Service Support Operations:"

- Coordinate Class I resupply
- Coordinate Class III resupply
- Coordinate Class IV resupply
- Coordinate Class V resupply
- Coordinate weapon system replacement operations
- Coordinate LOGPAC preparation with the field trains

The real challenge for the S4 is to now develop the conditions and standards for each of these tasks. For example, Coordinate Class III Resupply would look like this:

**TASK:** Coordinate Class III Resupply  
**CONDITION:** The section is operating from the CTCF and has communications with all units, the Field Trains Command Post, and the Brigade Rear Command Post.

**SUBTASKS AND STANDARDS:**

1. The section receives requests from units with 100% accuracy
2. The section relays requests to the Field Trains Command post with 100% accuracy
3. The section relays requirements to the Brigade Rear Command Post with 100% accuracy.

As a final note, the S4 does not have to develop this all by himself. The non-commissioned officers in the section can provide invaluable experience on S4 operations and should be used to provide a "common-sense check" on all of the collective tasks.

**Step 4: Develop individual tasks to support collective tasks.** Now that the S4 has developed his collective task list, it is time to determine what the individual soldier must do for the section to accomplish the task to standard. This is the time to integrate the unit's standard logistic system (see Step 1) into the training management process. The individual tasks must reflect how the unit

plans to conduct logistics. What follows is an example of an individual task list for Coordinate Class III Resupply from Step 3, above:

- Receive a BN/TF White 3 report.
- Send a BN/TF White 3 report.
- Prepare a BDE White 3 report.
- Send a BDE White 3 report.
- Prepare a LOGPAC checklist from a BN/TF White 3 report.

Again the S4 must develop conditions and standards. It is now essential he integrates his noncommissioned officers. They are the ones who will conduct the training, and their input is essential to make standards that are tough and realistic, while remaining "trainable."

**Step 5: Plan the training.** Now that the S4 has created a mission training plan for his section, training management is conducted as in any unit. Some specific points to consider are:

- Provide written training guidance. Although this may seem excessive for a six-man section, all of the day-to-day training distracters in the S4 shop make it very easy to lose focus. The training guidance provides a reference to continually plan and focus training.

- Hold weekly training meetings. The time of the meeting is dependent on the battalion and HHC training meetings. The S4 must gather his NCOs, close the door, and let someone else answer the phones for one hour. The meeting cannot become a "last week, this week, next week, let's go to the snack bar" meeting. The S4 must prepare for the meeting, and all must leave with a clear understanding of what, when, and how training will be conducted.

**Pre-execution checks and training execution.** What follows are techniques for training the S4 section.

- Train the Trainer. ANCOC for MOS 92Y does not fully prepare senior non-commissioned officers to run the CTCF. It is possible that the S4 will have an NCOIC who has never been to the field with a tactical unit. This gives the S4 the added responsibility of training his NCOIC to standard and adds to the training meeting's importance so that the NCOIC leaves fully prepared to train his soldiers.

- Incorporate the S1 section and Field Trains Command Post. In the field, it is imperative that S1 and S4 personnel can accomplish the other's role. The CTCF and FTCP are manned by both S4 and S1 personnel; the PAC NCOIC

will process resupply requests, and the S4 NCO will submit Personnel Daily Reports. By training personnel from both sections and using both command posts, the S4 can more realistically simulate what will happen in the field.

- During the crawl and walk phases of training, send actual reports over the radio from the CTCF and FTCP. This can be done with both CP vehicles parked in the motor pool. Use the S4's HMMWV to simulate radio traffic from the companies and the brigade.

- To execute the run phase of training, use battalion JANUS and SIMNET exercises to generate traffic that simulates what the CTCF could expect during an actual fight. Force first sergeants to receive reports from their units, and send these reports to the CTCF. After the battle, conduct the radio traffic required to reconstitute the battalion to the standards found in the ARTEP 71-2-MTP.

- Incorporate tasks into the training schedule as they are complete. For example, once the tasks, conditions, and standards are complete for Coordinate Class III Resupply, incorporate it into the training schedule. Use the slack time to develop tasks, conditions, and standards for Coordinate Class V Resupply.

- The S4 must expect that, to conduct battle-focused training in his section, he will have to work very late. The day to day missions of the S4 usually keep him in the office past 1800 hours. The added requirement of planning training will take longer.

All of this will ensure his section is trained on executing the routine tasks battalion logistics requires. This frees the S4 to conduct mission planning at the TOC, forecast logistic requirements for upcoming missions, and focus his efforts on the innumerable "special" requirements that require the S4's personal involvement.

Captain James E. Moore Jr. has served as a tank platoon leader, support platoon leader, battalion S4, and battalion maintenance officer. A recent graduate of AOAC, he is now assigned to the 2d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division at Ft. Riley, Kan.